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## The Editor's Page

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**W**HY do religions die? This question was raised in a former issue of the *Journal of Religion*. It was intimated that if the causes of mortality in religion could be ascertained from a study of the decline of defunct cults, we might be in a position to maintain the health of our religion in the light of this knowledge.

**Does religion ever really die?** What happened when men in the past began to forsake the temples where their fathers had worshiped? Did these men suddenly become oblivious of the spiritual needs which religion exists to meet? On the contrary, the abandoning of one form of religion occurred only because some other cult or some different system of religious philosophy met religion's needs more adequately. It is a familiar story in church history. When men gave up those pagan cults which now stand as dead memorials of the past, they carried into the Christian church their familiar hopes and fears. The so-called Hellenizing of Christianity simply means that what once was a Hellenistic cult or philosophy now became a Christian rite or a theology. The real continuity of religious sentiment in the transfer from Hellenism to Christianity can be easily traced by the historian.

**"Creative Christianity,"** an important book recently published from

the pen of Professor George Cross, is a suggestive interpretation of this virile aspect of religion. He contends that we never find the true essence of Christianity when we look for some fixed external doctrine or ritual or polity. The New Testament books are not mere reproductions. They are creative interpretations, each with its own originality. Evangelists and apostles were not mere chroniclers; each uttered the gospel with spiritual freedom. The moment we try to standardize Christianity in external forms we lose its real authority. Not passive conformity but creative freedom constitutes its real power.

**The motive of theology** is set forth by Professor Cross in this issue. Whenever content of doctrine is emphasized as the most important thing about theology, we have heresy-hunting, polemic attacks, denominational divisions, and all the unhappy features which we deplore. In particular just now those who stand for rigidity of doctrine are distrustful of the modern learning in our universities which leads to freedom of thinking. Professor Cross shows how both theology and science are ultimately concerned to interpret the world in such a way as to make it a better place in which to live. There is no "conflict" between science and a creative theology.

**The place of creative freedom in Christianity** is a real problem on mission fields. Shall Chinese Christians be encouraged to think out religious questions in their own way? Or shall they be expected to take over unchanged the theology of the West? Dr. Paul Hutchinson, in a notable article in this issue, indicates the perplexity and the strain which come from an attempt to define Christianity in terms of fixed content rather than in terms of creativity. Attention is called to a thought-provoking article in the next issue, entitled "The Passing of Paternalism in Foreign Missions."

**What does psychology do with religion?** Professor Schaub's discussion of the question will help readers of the *Journal* to know just what the psychologists are trying to do today. In the January issue an account of the present status of New Testament scholarship was given. Future issues of the *Journal* will deal with other phases of the study of religion. The time is ripe for a fruitful collaboration of scholars working by the historical method in different fields.

### WHO'S WHO

#### in this issue of the *Journal*?

*Paul Hutchinson* is an influential missionary of the Methodist Episcopal denomination in China.—

*Edward L. Schaub* is professor of Philosophy in Northwestern University.—*George Cross* is professor of Christian Theology in Rochester Theological Seminary.—*Worth M. Tippy* is secretary of the Commission on Social Service in the Methodist Episcopal denomination.—*Kenneth Saunders* is a professor in the Pacific School of Religion, and one of the leading authorities on modern Buddhism.

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

*Religion in the Universities*, by Rev. Charles W. Gilkey, of Chicago. This article embodies the results of observations made this past year in several universities. It is especially timely, in view of recent charges made against the spiritual influence of schools.

*Religion and Anthropology*, by Professor S. F. MacLennan, of Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio.

*The Religious Approach to the Latin American Mind*, by Rev. Samuel G. Inman, of New York, a leading authority on South American Missions.

*The Rationality of Belief in the Reality of God*, by Professor E. W. Lyman, of Union Theological Seminary. This article deals with a much-discussed question in our day.